

Puritan member of Parliament had invested in colonial enterprises, and had ideas as to commercial policy which were not those of the Government. Confident in their own energy and acumen, proud of their success, and regarding with profound distrust the interference both of Church and of State with matters of business and property rights, the commercial classes, in spite of their attachment to a militant mercantilism in matters of trade, were, even before the Civil War, more than half converted to the administrative nihilism which was to be the rule of social policy in the century following it. Their demand was the one which is usual in such - circumstances. It was that business affairs should be left to be settled by business men, unhampered by the intrusions of an antiquated morality or by misconceived arguments of public policy.⁶⁸

The separation of economic from ethical interests, which was the note of all this movement, was in sharp opposition to religious tradition, and it did not establish itself without a struggle. Even in the very capital of European commerce and finance, an embittered controversy was occasioned by the refusal to admit usurers to communion or to confer degrees upon them ; it was only after a storm of pamphleteering, in which the theological faculty of the University of Utrecht performed prodigies of zeal and ingenuity, that the States

of Holland and West Friesland closed the agitation by declaring that the Church had no concern with questions of banking.¹⁷ In the French Calvinist Churches, the decline of discipline had caused lamentations a generation earlier.*⁸ In America, the theocracy of Massachusetts, merciless alike to religious liberty and to economic license, was about to be undermined by the rise of new States like Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, whose tolerant, individualist and utilitarian temper was destined to find its greatest representative in the golden common sense of Benjamin Franklin.¹¹

¹¹ The sin of our too great fondness for trade, to the